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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this seminar were to examine the role of teaching about the French Revolution in European secondary schools, to examine common interpretations of this historical period, and to define methods of arriving at common perceptions. This report considers: (1) selected problems in teaching about the French Revolution in various European countries; (2) the impact of the Revolution on other countries; (3) overall perceptions of the positive results of the Revolution; and (4) examples of the relationship of the French Revolution to the history of selected European countries. An appendix contains the seminar's working groups' reports on: (1) the place of the French Revolution in various countries' history syllabi; (2) important French Revolution topics and themes; and (3) a comparison of selected countries' school age groups in terms of when the history of the French Revolution is taught and which revolution-related topics are stressed. A participant list is included. (JHP)

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39th Council of Europe Teachers' Seminar on "Teaching about the French Revolution in secondary schools in Europe"

Donaueschingen, 16-21 May 1988

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Council for Cultural Co-operation

Strasbourg 1988

Strasbourg 15 June 1988 DECS/EGT (88) 30

The CDCC's Teacher Bursaries Scheme

39th European Teachers' Seminar on "Teaching about the French Revolution in secondary schools in Europe"

Donaueschingen, Federal Republic of Germany
16-21 May 1988

Report by

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1. Introduction

Before setting out the conclusions reached by the participants in the seminar on "Teaching about the French Revolution in secondary schools in Europe" it seems useful to look back briefly at its initial objectives. The seminar was originally designed to establish the place assigned to the French Revolution in the curricula of European secondary schools and their teaching, to examine the possibilities of agreeing on a common interpretation of this period and to define approaches allowing this common viewpoint to be achieved.

Presented in this way, such a programme appeared vast and it seemed necessary to define to some extent the limits of our investigations. With this in mind, the introductory paper expressed the hope that the seminar would go beyond mere stocktakings and juxtapositions, lacking any coherence or true significance. Such an approach would not have paid dividends since it would only have replaced our existing mutual ignorance by a list of differences, on the pretext of respecting diversity. On the other hand, there was no question of defining, let alone imposing a single image or idea of the French Revolution and even less of proposing some allegedly ideal "blanket syllabus" for teaching about this period: to begin with, such an undertaking would have required quite different resources. Above all, any approach which would overly standardise or restrict the scope of the subject seemed premature. Moreover, the working groups' findings amply showed that, depending on the country concerned, the Revolution is studied at very different ages and with differing levels of requirement.

Despite the specific approaches to the French Revolution in the various European countries, the initial project consisted in seeking as much agreement as possible concerning the importance and significance of certain events. Rather than bulldozing through a certain idea and image of the French Revolution, our objective was to reach forms of consensus which could be modulated and which were incomplete, sweeping or definitive to varying degrees. It was a matter of highlighting certain events or interpretations, whilst sketching in the broad outlines of a European approach to the question and seeking the greatest possible number of points of agreement between the participants.

There was no question of confining the participants to a narrow brief, which would have negated the initial objectives. Instead the discussion was guided along two main lines. The first concentrated solely on the "events" of the Revolution, those, that is, to be highlighted in secondary schools, their relative importance and the chronological limits and common scales of dates to be adopted? The second, more thematic line of approach dealt with the "lasting results" of the Revolution for France but above all for Europe.

2. Initial problems

Firstly it must be said that any forecasts we might have been tempted to make regarding the conduct and results of the seminar were way off target. The fruit of our joint labours lay largely in the fact that controversies which might have been anticipated did not arise.

High on the list of possible obstacles was the fact that the French are deeply attached to "their" revolution. Opinion surveys have shown just how much public opinion in France adheres to the image of a France which has remained faithful to its Jacobin inheritance: in 1987, 51% of Frenchmen thought

that being French meant "defending freedoms"; an overwhelming majority felt that the overall outcome of the revolutionary period had been positive, owing thanks to a shift in public interest towards the beginning of the Revolution, epitomised almost exclusively in the happenings of 1789. In 1987, the French were also overwhelmingly convinced of the significance of their revolution for the world, of the superiority of their revolution compared with the American and Russian ones, and of the prestige accruing to France from this seminal event. We do not wish to discuss at this point whether or not such convictions are well-founded, but to point out that the idea of France having a "mission" at world level (which took root under the Third Republic) is still firmly anchored. Even today the resulting feeling of pride, even superiority, is not difficult to detect.

A seminar such as this, linked to the celebration of the bicentenary of 1789, could not run the risk of appearing right from the start to be an attempt to reinforce or legitimate this French "satisfaction". Was it not better to be prepared to sacrifice a number of widely accepted notions and to examine certain convictions afresh? Was there not a risk that French "ethnocentrism" would come under fire? It was indeed possible that the more detached view of the revolutionary period held by other European countries would produce an overall picture lacking in indulgence, or even critical of France itself (the Reign of Terror springs to mind here) and of the consequences of the French Revolution for neighbouring countries. How heavily would the memories of military conquest by the revolutionary or imperial armies weigh in the balance, or revolutionary ideas and principles imposed by force of arms, or again, the religious conflicts imported by the French conquests?

A further difficulty was posed by the position occupied by the writings of French historians (which cover very varied ideas) in the presentation, interpretation and analysis of the revolutionary period: would they not clash with radically different ideas?

In fact, as the discussions progressed, such fears proved to be largely unfounded: one of the major lessons of the seminar was that there is a far greater consensus than might have been imagined concerning the image of the French Revolution as reflected in teaching in different European countries.

3. Historiography

First and foremost the seminar showed just how far the French version of the Revolution has spread to other European countries: indeed, its most diverse currents seem to have been truly assimilated in their teaching. The various aspects of French historians' views of history may be critically compared, as happens in Germany. Or only one aspect of the French approach may be adopted and eventually become preponderant, as with the idea of an "Atlantic revolution" which is prevalent in Spain and Portugal. As a result, there has been no splitting of interpretations according to national schools of thought. Analyses appear on the whole to be grouped around three major poles of interpretation, corresponding roughly to those of Soboul, Godechot and Furet.

We can therefore only wish for a broader presentation of the various interpretations in each country, in order to avoid an over-simplified or one-sided approach. The importance of offering different presentations and interpretations for developing pupils' critical faculties was emphasised by all the participants, both at the seminar itself and in the subsequent reports.

It must be said though that the absence of British participants may have slewed the discussions. For example, Cobb's and Cobban's viewpoints were not voiced, even though they contradict several of the views held by the French school of history. Hence, one element of the debate was missing and it cannot be denied that the discussions might have been trickier if certain aspects of Anglo-Saxon historiography have been represented and defended.

4. Overall perception of the French Revolution

The seminar's major conclusion was that the positive connotations of the French Revolution in France itself are largely shared by other countries, judging by the teaching given in each country.

The foreign consequences of the Revolution (military conquests and all that they brought in their train, especially religious conflicts) have only slightly tarnished its overall image.

However, this generally positive judgement takes appreciably different forms. Conquest by the French (whether the revolutionary, consular or imperial forces) is sometimes viewed neutrally, as in Italy for example where the subsequent Austrian occupation shed a different light on the French presence. It can also be viewed in a positive way, as in Belgium, which is typical of states that were "occupied" before the French invaded and where the drawbacks of the invasion have been minimised. In the latter case it is interesting to note that even in religious schools the negative memory of the religious persecutions exported by the French seems to have been largely forgotten nowadays. In other cases, especially in countries which were sovereign states before the French invaded them, the French presence has sometimes left a negative trace which has been carried over into that country's teaching. However, such memories are not over-dramatised today and it can almost be said that they are pushed into the background. This is so in Portugal, and also in Spain where the ravages of the imperial troops are no longer brought to the fore, so as not to divert attention from the beginnings of liberalism.

All in all, everything points to the fact that the positive effects of the French presence, ie the direct or indirect, short-term or long-term, social or political results, have cancelled or at least shed a different light on the long-held negative view of the expansion of the "Grande Nation".

Nevertheless, the Reign of Terror, the personality of Robespierre and Jacobinism itself are still defined and judged in very different ways, particularly by France and Germany. The years 1793 and 1794 do not seem to be the main focus of attention in any country: although the importance of the Terror is not minimised, it is left somewhat to one side.

5. A consensus of views

We cannot then be surprised that interest has centered around the positive results of the French Revolution. There are hardly any differences in the way these are treated in the teaching of the various countries of Europe.

However, we must be cautious in recording such unanimity, which needs to be consolidated by more thorough studies. We cannot eliminate the hypothesis that the French Revolution is not seen in such a favourable light in those countries where public freedoms, religious tolerance and parliamentary

government were established in part before 1789. Bearing in mind this methodological precaution, nevertheless, the dominant impression is one of a common heritage which has benefited each country, at least overall and in the long-term.

This explains the consensus which emerged on the "positive results" of the Revolution. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens topped the list of positive results, together with the legal rights acquired over the entire period. There was also a marked attachment to the ideas of a constitutional model bequeathed by the Revolution, democracy and liberalism (the liberal ideas of the period as well as liberal forms of government inspired by the constitutions of the revolutionary era). On the other hand, the concept of nationhood triggered off a lively debate and was far from securing unanimous agreement. Moreover, some countries emphasise aspects of post-revolutionary life which others fail to note: for example the Norwegians highlight the new role played by women in political life.

6. Chronological convergences

The seminar did not draw up a "standard chronology", selecting certain events from among the innumerable happenings of the revolutionary period and imposing a rigid hierarchy on them. This was not our purpose. However, the joint discussions revealed a meaningful consensus regarding chronology.

There was widespread agreement that the revolutionary period as such (1789-1799) should be linked to the consular and imperial periods. Although some countries show the Empire as issuing from the Revolution whereas others contrast them, the two periods are seen as a whole and are studied together. In France itself, although such a view might arouse some reticence, this approach prevails in new syllabuses.

There was also agreement that the period of the French Revolution must be seen against a very wide background, in geographical terms and in time. The participants saw the Revolution as a moment, albeit a privileged moment, forming part of a phase of political upheaval which began long before the Revolution (as far back as the XVIIth century for some, with the English Revolution) and continued far into the XIXth century (1848). This phase was not confined to Europe; for most of the teachers in attendance, it included transformations in North America. Even better, the French Revolution may be regarded as one episode in a vast series of profound upheavals in all fields (politics, agriculture, industry, the social and cultural spheres) which began long before 1789 and continued throughout the XIXth century.

A two-pronged approach to defining the period began to emerge, one which attempted to take account of current teaching, while indicating a presentation acceptable to all. It started from a chronology limited to the original French context, emphasising the initial events of summer 1789, the constitution of 1791 and the liberal laws which accompanied it. In 1792 this chronology highlighted the war with Austria, the fall of the monarchy and the election of the Convention. After this there was no longer full agreement on key dates until 9 Thermidor 1794. It would therefore be possible to deal more thematically with the conflict between Girondins and Montagnards (and the issue of federalism versus centralism), the social and democratic experiments of 1793, the constitution of 1793, the Reign of Terror and the civil war. The law separating Church and State in 1795 would stand out in the period of the Thermidor Convention. The 18 Brumaire 1799 could be presented as a date marking the end of the actual Revolution in the French context.

Yet this French chronology would need to be paralleled or accompanied by a more "European" one, in which 1799 is not the end of the matter, rather the reverse. The key dates would be those when the impact of the French Revolution was felt in other European countries. The chronology would therefore vary in the light of different national situations: for Belgium the important date would be 1795 (annexation by France); for Italy 1797 and 1799 (a republic in the North, then in Naples); for Switzerland 1798 (Helvetic Republic) and 1803 (mediation instrument imposed by Napoleon creating a more viable federal regime); for Germany 1806 (end of the Holy Roman Empire); for Spain 1808 (beginning of French domination) and 1812 (liberal constitution); for Norway 1814 (proclamation of a liberal constitution, preceding the union of Norway and Sweden).

7. Further progress?

To a large extent, therefore, the objectives fixed at the outset had been reached. The consensus which had emerged in the course of the discussions - which was by no means a foregone conclusion - seemed greater than might originally have hoped for. Was it possible to go further? How could the results of this initial work be prolonged? Answering such questions calls for comments on method and on ways of making practical use of the results obtained.

A seminar such as this one has to contend with two-fold ambiguity, in its composition and in the organisation of its work:

i. Is the aim to train a group of teachers to take a European view when teaching history; or to use their joint work to foster a common vision, or in the long-term at least to promote closer views among other European teachers?

ii. Is it designed to be a forum for historians, specialists in the relevant period in their own country; or a forum for teachers (in the broad sense of the word) concerned with defining common ways of learning?

These options are not necessarily contradictory. Yet the coexistence of different potentialities and divergent aspirations among the participants can only hamper their work in this type of seminar and limit its final result.

i. It therefore seems advisable to continue in the same vein as this seminar on the French Revolution, tackling first "sensitive", even potentially conflict-laden areas of European history. There is no doubt that it will be far more promising and fruitful to seek a consensus on the delicate issues of our common history and to tackle the difficulties at the outset, rather then sticking to subjects where a consensus already exists, or even those where nothing is really "at stake". Accordingly, Council of Europe seminars might be envisaged on teaching about the two world wars; on the issues of nationhood and nationalism in Europe; on authoritarian or totalitarian governments, movements and ideologies.

ii. It would be better if too wide a spread of topics could be avoided. Longer periods of time might be devoted to subjects carefully defined at the outset, thoroughly prepared by the participants, and above all divided into successive stages, each stage carefully delineated. To sum up, longer-term projects could replace isolated studies, whose results are necessarily limited and difficult to relate to the results of other studies.

iii. It would also seem advisable to forge a close link between the work of European specialists in the chosen field and that of teachers more concerned with didactic aspects and classroom methodology. Not with the aim of subordinating one group to another, but in order to achieve true co-operation, starting from separate concerns.

iv. One of the major considerations in work such as this relates to its subsequent distribution throughout schools in all European countries. We can only express our regret that the documents prepared by the Council of Europe on the basis of seminars such as this are not made generally available. This fact was deplored by the participants, who would have liked to be able to use these Council of Europe publications in their respective establishments.

v. Our last point is merely the logical result of the preferences expressed above. Our hope is to see a co-ordinated, large-scale operation, with the goal of producing a true "textbook of European history". Not in order to construct a rigid, artificial framework designed to obliterate specific national characteristics, or to deny "historical memories" which naturally differ, but in order to devise an instrument of reference enabling national points of view to be placed in a wider setting for purposes of comparison, whilst working towards as broad a consensus as possible on the way history should be written.

Our joint stock-taking exercise on how the French Revolution is taught in European countries should be a first milestone on this road.

A P P E N D I X I

REPORTS BY THE WORKING GROUPS

1st group

Chairman: Daniel Martin
Rapporteur: Pierre de Vargas

I. Place of the French Revolution in history syllabuses in our various countries

In principle, the French Revolution is covered twice: firstly in the 8th year of compulsory schooling; secondly in the upper secondary cycle for those pupils who have gone through a selection barrier. However there are major differences regarding its place in the syllabus and the proportion of pupils tackling it in depth in the upper cycle.

France is a special case, since, logically enough, this seminal national event occupies a prime place, with specific syllabuses in the 4th and 2nd classes (3rd and 5th forms) of secondary schools (± 15 and ±17 years of age respectively), after an introduction at primary school. In Germany - or at least the Länder represented - the French Revolution is also studied in some depth, with extremely specific requirements (impossible to fulfil, according to one participant). We were also struck by the large place which history in general and the French Revolution in particular still have in Spain.

II. What should syllabuses cover?

In our search for agreement on the chronological landmarks signalling the events and ideas which most deserve to be remembered, we first had to make two "columns", one for France and the other covering the exporting of the French Revolution to Europe.

On the French side it was easy enough to agree on the importance of: the initial events of July-August 1789; the first constitution of 1791 and the liberal laws which accompanied it; the declaration of war with Austria, the fall of the monarchy and the election of the Republican Convention, all in 1792. On the other hand, the events of the First Republic might be better approached more thematically, since no important date could be unanimously agreed on prior to 9 Thermidor of year II. Yet the conflicts between Girondins and Montagnards, the social and democratic experiments of 1793, the Reign of Terror and the civil war all deserve to be covered.

1795 seems to be the important date of the period of the Thermidor Convention for the law separating Church and State, which inaugurated the French tradition of a secular state. The Revolution came to an end in France on 18 Brumaire of VIII (1799) with the military coup d'état.

For the other, ie European-chronology, Mr Verrelst proposed a table which was accepted by all. In an attempt to set history in perspective, this table fitted the 10 years of the French Revolution into a series of upheavals which began a century beforehand and continued far into the XIXth century. Classifying the French Revolution as one step in a process does not in any way detract from its great importance. In the political field it was preceded by the Glorious Revolution of 1688, by the regimes of enlightened despots (eg the reign of Josef II over the Austrian-occupied Netherlands) and by the

independence of the United States of America. In the history of ideas, the texts of the French Revolution were preceded by those of Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Beccaria, etc.

Taking this broad view, 1799 did not bring the process to a close, rather the reverse. This was confirmed by the key dates provided by participants regarding the impact of the French Revolution in their respective countries: namely, for Belgium, 1795 (annexation by France) ; for Italy, 1797 (Cisalpine Republic, etc) and 1799 (Republic of Naples); for Switzerland, 1798 (Helvetic Republic) and 1803 when a more viable regime was established. For Germany it was 1806 (end of the Holy Roman Empire); for Spain, 1808 (beginning of French domination) and above all 1812, the date of the liberal constitution which was to prove the primer for all liberal developments up to the present day; for Norway it was 1814, when the Norwegian elite proclaimed a liberal constitution inspired by that of 1789-91, prior to the union of Norway and Sweden.

III. What themes should be covered?

The members of our group seemed chiefly concerned by the Revolution's role in its expansionist phase, from 1794 onwards. As one of our number said, the taking up of arms by the "Grande Nation" represented a "prolongation of the Age of Enlightenment" and a series of social and political innovations which shook the old order, laid the foundation for the future and left a lasting trace. Revolutionary France's role in the birth of European nationalities proved less simple. Some countries tend to lay more stress on the administrative unification of their territory and the encouragement given to the progressive bourgeoisie. Others are more aware of the ensuing military violence, to the extent of seeing armed France as the 'hereditary enemy', to use Bismarck's words of 1870. A perhaps caricatural example of this attitude in the present day is that of some Swiss historians who continue to view the massacre of the Swiss Guard on 10 August 1792 as the major event of the period.

In fact, teachers' attitudes to the French Revolution seem surprisingly coloured by the history of their nation. Certain possible explanations come to mind here, reinforced by the absence of some nationalities at the seminar.

In those European countries which have a record of winning their own public freedoms - the Netherlands, where freedom of thought and religious tolerance were established at the beginning of the XVIIth century, Britain, where parliamentary government was established at the end of the XVIIth century, German-speaking Switzerland with its form of direct, local democracy going back to the old Germanic freedoms - current teaching does not seem to attach great value to the French Revolution and teachers do not seem highly motivated in this direction; on the other hand, people in these countries seem very aware of the violent side of the Revolution.

In those countries ruled by an absolute monarchy for a long time, or which lived under authoritarian governments in the XXth century (Italy, Spain, Germany), current teaching seems to set great store by the French Revolution and teachers seem to find it an ideal means of tackling the issues of human rights and the creation of a democratic nation. This is so true that Spanish teachers, for example, go out of their way to minimise the violence of 1808 in order not to divert attention from the importance of liberalism taking root. This impression is so strong that - if the writer may hazard a guess - a present-day observer who had left Europe 40 or 50 years ago would imagine that the situation regarding countries' commitment to human rights had been reversed.

One last question of interpretation held our attention, arising from recent declarations which have focused attention on the Reign of Terror and the violence of the civil war in Vendée: is there a direct line of descent from Robespierre to Stalin, or to be more specific, is there a chain of ideas stretching from Rousseau (Social Contract) to Stalin through Babeuf, Buonarrotti, Marx and Lenin? In short was totalitarianism conceived in the search for happiness through virtue during the XVIIIth century?

For the French historians present, any such relationship was continued, superficial and deserving of rejection. The violence could be explained by the threat to the Revolution, not by a deliberate act of will as in XXth century totalitarianism. On the other hand, the guidelines for history teaching in the Länder of Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia recommend presenting Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety between Prairial and Thermidor as an example of a small group aiming to impose by violent means the truth which they claimed to embody, ie as an example of fundamentalism and intolerance, a precursor of totalitarianism of the right or of the left.

It was unanimously agreed that hasty generalisations and over-simplifications were dangerous, for example the cover of the Dictionnaire de la Révolution français published by Bouquins-Laffont, illustrated by an executioner and a guillotine. It would be regrettable if the period which witnessed the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man together with a series of political experiments ranging from the moderate to the extreme, were to be reduced to the image of the guillotine alone. Fortunately, it is the Declaration of the Rights of Man that is in fact stressed in most of the countries represented at the seminar.

Conclusion

The chief concern expressed by several teachers was that at the very time when the issues surrounding the French Revolution are becoming wider, deeper and more subtle, their pupils (whose workload is constantly increasing and who desire far less political information than was the case 15 or 20 years ago) were tending to expect teachers to provide an increasingly succinct version of history. How can we be clear and concise without restricting the scope of our subject? For the participants, this seminar was certainly the best means of getting closer to this goal.

2nd group

Chairman: Jo Cornelissen
Rapporteur: Alfred Bruneel

1. School years age-groups in which the history of the French Revolution is taught

In the Federal Republic of Germany, more specifically in the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia, in the 9th and 11th years (±15 and ±17), for nine hours.

In Denmark in the 11th year (±17) for about 15-20 school periods, provided the teacher has chosen this subject.

In Norway in the 2nd final year (±17) for about three hours, if the teacher has chosen this subject.

In Ireland in the 2nd year (±13 to 14) for about five hours, if the subject has been chosen.

In Spain in the 3rd year (±14) for three to four hours as part of world history and in the final year (±18) for eight hours to pupils doing arts, also as part of world history.

In French-speaking Belgium in the 4th year (±16). The number of hours is fixed by the teacher, depending on the timetable he has drawn up to cover all aspects of the year's syllabus.

In Italian-speaking Switzerland in the 3rd year (±15) for about eight hours and in the 12th year (±17) for 10 hours. Pupils who have opted to do history in the final year, and whose subject is the French Revolution, do an extra two hours.

In France in the 4th class (±15) for a number of hours fixed by the teacher within a weekly timetable which allocates $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours to history, and in the 2nd class (±17) on the same principle but with two hours a week devoted to history.

2. What periods are studied?

In the Federal Republic of Germany the Napoleonic period and the history of the French Revolution are not separated. However in some Länder the two periods are contrasted in order to bring out the difference between them; sometimes (systematically in Baden-Württemberg) the Directory is studied in order to show the rise of Napoleon.

In Spain there is a continuity in the study of the French Revolution and of Napoleon. Although the Empire is treated in a negative light, attention is drawn to the benefits of the French Revolution.

In Norway the history of the French Revolution is studied together with that of the Empire, but the teacher often concentrates on the revolutionary period.

In Italian-speaking Switzerland the Empire is seen as the direct outcome of the French Revolution, and Napoleon's role is emphasised, being part of national history.

In Denmark study of the French Revolution is restricted to the Thermidorian period.

In France both periods are studied.

In Ireland the history of the French Revolution ends with Napoleon.

In French-speaking Belgium both periods are studied.

To sum up, most of the countries in the group cover the history of the French Revolution and that of the Empire together.

3. Within this span of time, what are the topics and periods which are studied in greater detail?

Four main topics are studied.

1. Some syllabuses emphasise the economic and social causes, using particular events or acts as examples; others concentrate on the events themselves. For example:

   In Norway the emphasis is laid on the budgetary deficit and the registers of complaints.

   In Spain the emphasis is on the disparity between the social classes and the distribution of food supplies, in the somewhat unusual context of a study of both the industrial revolution and the French Revolution.

   In Italian-speaking Switzerland the structural and economic causes are stressed.

2. 1789

   The events which are emphasised here vary from one country to another. For example:

   In the Federal Republic of Germany: the Tennis Court oath, the taking of the Bastille, the night of 4 August and the ensuing panic, the administrative revolution, emancipation of the Jews.

   In Spain: the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens.

   In Norway: the role of women (events of 5 and 6 October 1789) and women's rights compared with the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

   In Italian-speaking Switzerland: the evolution of political thought prior to 1789, together with a comparative study of the different constitutions.

   In France and French-speaking Belgium: the events emphasised depend on the teacher's interpretation.

3. 1792-93

   The events emphasised here also vary:

In the Federal Republic of Germany: economic and social history, analysis of the different constitutions, religious factors, economic factors ("loi du général" affecting the "assignats").

In Italian-speaking Switzerland: Jacobin centralism, the Reign of Terror, the differences between the constitutions of 1791 and 1793.

In Norway: social progress, eg divorce.

In Denmark: daily life and the history of ideas.

In Spain: study of a wider context based on the analysis of texts illustrating political and economic differences, etc.

In France and French-speaking Belgium: see above.

4. The heritage of the French Revolution compared with national history

In the Federal Republic of Germany: attention is focused on the continued existence of traditional society vis-à-vis revolutionary law and the Civil Code; also on the fact that some regions requested union with France.

In Denmark: the Empire is studied in order to show Denmark's hostility to Britain, whose cannons destroyed the Danish fleet.

In Norway: the relationship between the Norwegian constitution and the first French constitution is highlighted.

In Spain: the national political consequences of the French occupation are emphasised.

In Italian-speaking Switzerland: the fact that the region was to become independent and form a canton thanks to Napoleon is stressed.

In French-speaking Belgium: the beneficial results of the French Revolution (administrative organisation - legal codes - justice - social laws - divorce) are explained, together with the negative aspects (conscription, civil status of the clergy).

Conclusion

Each speaker developed a particular aspect of the French Revolution around the above topics to mark what seemed to him to be the most characteristic and interesting features of the various aspects of the history of this period, and to show its consequences, beneficial or otherwise.

In any event, "collective memories" depend on national syllabuses. (For example, in Spain a distinction is made between the French Revolution and the Empire, the first showing the conquests of democracy and the second the feeling of opposition to a nationalistic war; for the Germans, although the French presence was cruelly felt, the beneficial aspects (abolition of serfdom and the application of human rights) stand out as positive features in the collective memory).

Generally speaking, the view of the French Revolution is that it was beneficial while the negative aspects of this period seem to have faded into the background.

Four topics appear to predominate in the study of the French Revolution:

1. comparison between the constitutions of 1791 and 1793;

2. the opposition between federalism and centralism;

3. the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens;

4. the economic, political and social changes, seen not as one evolutive continuum, but as separate periods (pre 1789 - 1789 - 1792-93 ...).

What conclusions can be drawn?

In view of the fact that it is studied in all our countries, the history of the French Revolution is part of a common heritage which has benefited us all.

It seems that study of the French Revolution leads teachers to adopt a didactic approach which, like the remainder of the history syllabus, is designed to encourage pupils to think, to compare documents, in short to develop their critical faculties.

However, critical faculties can only be developed by using the method of historical criticism.

The various versions of the history of the French Revolution afford teachers an overview of the different conceptions and interpretations of this period of history. They are therefore able to exercise their pupils' critical faculties by referring to texts by different authors specialising in this field, whose interpretations depend on their political or even philosophical options.

Knowing the facts, and in the light of these different versions of history, teachers can envisage study of the history of this period objectively. However, in order to simplify their task, they may well prefer the opinion of a particular author and be implicitly influenced by this author.

A second point, of considerable importance, is the meaning given to the vocabulary used. Concepts such as direct democracy, representative democracy, natural right, absolute monarchy or constitutional monarchy must be defined. Some words can mean different things in different countries, the term "Jacobin" for example.

It would be ideal if teachers could initiate congenial group work, for example studying vocabulary together with their colleagues teaching the language of the country.

Such group work has already been carried out at Evreux in connection with the forthcoming bicentenery of the French Revolution.

To sum up: the existence of extremely diverse versions allows the history of the French Revolution to be viewed in the light of a given interpretation, which in turn allows an instructive, critical approach.

Further, defining concepts and vocabulary for pupils is an indispensable task, so that each concept and word has a clearly understood meaning.

3rd group

Chairman: Monique Guinamard

Rapporteur: Pierre Pageot

1. In what time-scale and geographical context does teaching in each country set the Revolution?

The historical setting is always very wide in scope. For some, the French Revolution is a milestone in the midst of a vast era of economic, social and political change. This is so in Italy, where the Revolution is taught in the context of the bourgeois revolution; in Belgium, where it is set against the background of European history in the XVIIIth to XIXth centuries; and in Germany, where political revolutions and the industrial revolution are however taught separately. In other countries it is seen from an Atlantic point of view: in Portugal, it starts with parliamentary government in England and the American revolution and goes up to 1830; in Spain, the period runs from American independence to 1848. Switzerland hesitates at present between these two concepts. Luxembourg and France place the Revolution and the Empire, treated as one, in a series of transformations ranging from the English Revolution to 1848.

In some countries teaching goes hand in hand with a discussion of the different versions of history: Germany attaches great importance to this in its curricula; in Italy and Switzerland Furet's and Soloul's ideas are compared and contrasted; in Belgium a typology of the various revolutions is presented. Soboul still seems to dominate the presentation in Luxembourg; he is also used in Spain, albeit integrated into Godechot's wider perspective. Portuguese teaching is also based on Godechot and a discussion of different versions of history is initiated in the final year of secondary education (- 18).

2. From what angle is the French Revolution presented in the various countries?

Human rights and model constitution are unanimously accepted as positive results of the French Revolution. The consequences of the invasions which took place in the wake of the revolutionary and imperial wars are studied, without over-dramatising them. They are usually regarded in more favourable light in those states which were occupied at the time by another power than in those which were sovereign states. But all countries, some positive consequences, both direct and indirect, are attributed to them.

Following political changes, several countries have recently replaced a narrow, nationalistic view, which was hostile to any intrusion of foreign ideas, with a more open-minded approach.

Italy gives pride of place to the economic and social roots of the revolutionary process. Belgium highlights the boost given to local insurrection by the fall of the Bastille and stresses the secular nature of modern states; the end of the Austrian occupations is appreciated. Religious schools always refer to the sale of national assets and the dissolution of monasteries. There are favourable memories of Napoleon. In Germany democratic values, which are prized as the foundation of the present deferal state, are sometimes contrasted with Jacobinism, which is identified with an indigenous revolutionary socialist and terrorist tradition. In Spain it is suggested that the invasion interfered with the country's natural political development and strengthened the army's role. In

Switzerland, where conquest is generally disliked, the positive effects on XIXth century institutions and on the country's necessary transformations are acknowledged.

In almost all countries the vigorous religious conflict created by the Revolution is relagated to the background.

3. How do revolutionary ideas resurface after the French Revolution?

In all countries the period of national history following the French Revolution is taught by studying the liberal regimes which were inspired to some degree by the consititutions of the revolutionary era. In countries where there was no such resurgence, teaching emphasises the continuing existence of liberal ideas among the intellectual elite. The idea of nationhood which was current among the elite of certain regions (eg Germany) from the XVIIIth century onwards seems to have been strengthened by the Revolution and perhaps by the wars above all.

Mention of the idea of nationhood triggered off a heated debate which showed that the issue is far from being resolved and that even the concepts of nation and nationality vary considerably from one country to another. It proved impossible to find a common denominator on which to base a summing-up of the various viewpoints.

APPENDIX II / ANNEXE II / ANHANG II

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LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS/
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